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Stratton Blasts CIA Failure To Spot Red Troops in Cuba

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WASHINGTON—A high-ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee said yesterday he was convinced "the Russians could put 5,000 more combat troops tomorrow night in Cuba and we would not know about it and could have nuclear weapons there and we would not know about it."

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"Our intelligence is abominable," Rep. Samuel S. Stratton, D-Amsterdam, said in an interview.

The Congressman said he was recommending that the new congressional overhaul of committee operations assign military intelligence authorizations to the Armed Services unit, as well as the intelligence committee.

On June 28, 1978, Stratton said, after he had been advised to find out what was going on in Cuba, his committee had asked intelligence leaders about developments there and was told there were none.

Stratton said he had heard rumors, but the military and intelligence spokesmen said nothing was going on, that everything was quiet around the Soviet submarine base at Cienfuegos.

"They had had indications, but they were not telling us," Stratton said. "I feel they were lying to us."

Six months later, he said, the intelligence officers testified that the Russian MIG-23 planes discovered in Cuba would probably not be carrying nuclear weapons, but they had booted

that opportunity to give straight information, too.

When CIA Director Stansfield Turner briefed the Armed Services Committee last week on the Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, Stratton said, he testified the administration had placed a low priority on intelligence in Cuba.

Stratton said it was the President who had canceled the flights over Cuba, so that intelligence approach was still available if the administration wanted to use it.

Admiral Turner said there was not enough "human intelligence."

Stratton replied that it was Admiral Turner who fired 700 CIA agents when he took over the agency and that was one reason manpower was low.

Turner complained it was difficult to operate in a closed society like Cuba and that Cubans returning to the island were regarded suspiciously by authorities there.

Stratton said that was true of all closed societies, including

North Vietnam and the Soviet Union, but those were the very countries that posed a threat to the United States.

"They treat the threat like inflation," Stratton said of the administration.

"They hope it will just go away."

"If we can't handle the situation we are in trouble," he added.

As for the presence of American troops in Cuba's Guantanamo Bay and Turkey, Stratton said, "We didn't sneak them in."

He maintained that the issue of Soviet forces in Cuba should definitely be linked to Senate ratification of the strategic arms limitation treaty, contrary to the view of Sen. Jacob K. Javits, R-N.Y.

He estimated that the brigade might be designed to help more revolutionary movements in Latin America or a take-over of the Panama Canal.

When Turner denied the CIA was soft-pedaling the Cuban problem because of a fear of upsetting the SALT chances in the Senate, Stratton said he did not believe him.